

NATURE STUDY.

In the first place it is rather difficult to decide, when it comes to actual working, what exactly is meant by the term "Nature Study." If anyone in the pride of her earliest experiences with the child or with Mother Nature herself think to set a boundary, saying, this is "Nature," that is not, she will very soon find herself pulled up with shocks. When you have passed an examination in botany, and have "observed" more or less accurately a few birds and beasts, and have possessed yourself of a bird-book and a London catalogue, it is quite possible you may be called upon to cast aside all these things and learn to put worms—those sacred annelids!—on a hook, wherewith to attract the unwary trout, or you may assist in the construction of a ferret hutch, the inmates of which are destined to murder innocent little rabbits. Thus your great "reverence for life" receives shocks not easily recovered from.

You may be planted in a smoky town where the only opportunities of "Nature Study" are afforded by black-beetles, house-flies, and sparrows. You may go a whole season without having made a flower list or seen a wild bird. Still there is always a museum, and one sometimes finds worms, weavils, and chrysalids in a flower-box. And again, if you go a-fishing or a-ferreting there are always compensations. I am afraid many of us would find that we got a great deal of excitement out of both pursuits, and that of Isaak Walton conduces cheerfulness and a general good-fellowship with bird, beast, and flower.

In my very limited experience I have found that one has to be a little careful not to make this most fascinating of studies a bore to the children. Perhaps it is a dreadful admission, but, honestly, haven't some of you found the same thing? especially with regard to the *notes* of walks, &c. It is very tiresome, sometimes, when there are *so* many things to be done, and it takes such a long time to get your book ready—to rule lines and columns for a list and for the

notes—and then if someone does it for you it is not your very own book. Has anyone solved this difficulty, or ought it not to be one? How would it be to have a separate book, a sort of family note book with lines for the notes, and to do nothing but painting in the Nature Note Book, which would not then be a *note* book. I expect other people have long since found out a plan.

Again, it is difficult to get all the various branches of Nature Study in, and to do them well, if you are in the country. Collections mean whole evenings of arranging and writing labels, and periodical inspection. Painting takes time, birds and flowers, insects, &c., all must be "looked up."

These, however, are minor details. The study of the laws of Nature grows more and more fascinating every day, and threatens to swallow up all other studies—or rather, blends itself with every other study. In every aspect of life the child learns to draw on this source. Would he learn of God? Has not God made all these things? God's laws are the laws of Nature. He finds the love of God expressed in the fields and in the hedgerows. Everything in Nature lives by rule—can the child alone be unruly. He sees the inevitable results of disobedience to law all round him. Also the praise of God is in the very air he breathes as he walks along the lanes. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.

Then, if you think about it, you can take illustrations from Nature for every study the child takes up. Take the one apparently most remote—Arithmetic—everything in Nature is bounded and limited by number: flowers have their parts in so many, the number of legs is unalterable for every class of animals, years are limited, and "the very hairs of our heads are numbered." Geography! why that is a branch of Nature Study. History, Literature, Language, Nature Study again; human nature; Music—do we not learn our "rudiments" from the birds, water, wind. What else is left? Not much, if anything at all. Let us then "study Nature" with all our might, that by her light we may live and learn.

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